



Suggestions in Handling a One-Sided Match

Soccer matches that end up being blowout games are not much fun, even for the team dominating an opponent. As coaches, we need to be creative and challenge our players to continue to compete in these games and help our players develop their skills individually and as members of a team.

It is very important that we never advise a team to stop scoring. The objective of the game is to score goals. Deciding not to try and achieve that objective is disrespectful to an opponent and the game. But there are things the coaches for both teams can do to create a positive playing environment, even in the midst of a one-sided game. Here are some options to consider:

For the Team Doing Well – You can usually see a one-sided match developing. Act early.

1. Nearly every team has a player or two who rarely, if ever, scores a goal. Have your team build-up play with the express purpose of creating plays that will allow those players to have finishing attempts on goal. Your team can continue to attack, with the restriction that a particular player or player will make the attempts on goal.
2. Require any finishing attempts using the feet to be taken using the players weaker foot..
3. For players in age groups where heading is permitted, require that any finishing attempts be made via a header only.
4. Require that the team connect a particular number of passes in the defending half of the field before they are allowed to penetrate the attacking half.
5. Require that any shots taken at goal be made on a one touch. Or, any shots taken must be off a one touch after receiving a drop pass.
6. Require every scoring attempt to be made from a cross from a particular side of the field. If successful, the next scoring attempt must come from a cross on the opposite side of the field.

For the Team Not Doing Well

This is a tough position and many of us have been there with you. First, recognize that you are not going to solve all of your issues during the course of a single match, particular after the score gets away from you. Second, you can find “victories” within the game as you develop your team. Finally, correct what you can correct by focusing on your own team. Do not let a blowout devolve into a rant over another team having a “ringer. Rather, let’s be creative in helping our team find some measures of success.





As noted above, the primary attacking objective is to score goals. But to get there, you may need to focus on some other areas and aspects of play to find success. For example, you might try the following:

1. Challenge your team to see if they can string together a certain number of passes together. If they do, set a higher bar, with the ultimate goal of building towards goal and having a scoring attempt.
2. Work towards concentrating an attack on a certain area of the field. For example, attempt to play with Width by attacking a particular flank, and see if you can execute a cross into the Penalty Area or Goal Area. Even if you do not score, breaking the game down into elements like this can eventually lead to successful finishing.
3. Work with your attacking forwards and have them make diagonal runs when you have the ball in the midfield. Even if passes are not made to them or passes are unsuccessful, we still want to see that movement to unbalance the defense and create penetrating scoring chances. Again, it may not pay off right away but if you can get your players to make these attempts, praise the effort so that it continues.
4. Pick certain time blocks to focus on certain defending issues:
 - a. Spend ten minutes ensuring that the back line stays even with one another and does not allow an attacker to hide in spaces in between the fullbacks.
 - b. Spend ten minutes ensuring that your central fullbacks (4 and 5) and holding midfielder (6) stay compact so that no balls can penetrate the middle.
 - c. Spend ten minutes ensuring that your outside fullbacks (2 and 3) are in position to provide Cover and Balance their fellow defenders.
 - d. Instruct your goalkeeper to play higher and farther away from goal than usual to see if he/she can provide Cover to fellow defenders on long balls played into the defending half of the field. (In other words, instead of having your goalkeeper back in the Penalty Area, have them outside the arc on top of the Penalty Area when the ball is on the other side of the field.)

Conclusion

There are many other options you can try. We encourage our coaches to be creative in finding solutions to these issues, instead of simply stopping scoring or playing keep-away for 30 minutes.

